

# The Style Invitational

## Week CLI: Manufacturing



BY BOB STAKE FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

**If Nike made kitchen appliances, basketball would be a much slower game.**

**This Week's Contest** was suggested by Christopher L. Parkin of Washington, based upon the old Web jokes about what would happen if Microsoft designed cars ("They'd crash twice a day for no reason"; "With every new model, you'd have to learn to drive all over again, because the controls would be entirely different," etc.). Your challenge is to take any product and explain how it would be different if it were designed by a different existing company. First-prize winner gets a unopened, vintage 1963 package of 36 individual fluted cardboard "chef's party trays" for holding hot dogs.

First runner-up wins the tacky but estimable Style Invitational Loser Pen. Other runners-up win the coveted Style Invitational Loser T-shirt. Honorable mentions get the mildly sought-after Style Invitational bumper sticker. Send your entries via fax to 202-334-4312 or by e-mail to [losers@washpost.com](mailto:losers@washpost.com). U.S. mail entries are no longer accepted. Deadline is Monday, Dec. 23. All entries must include the week number of the contest and your name, postal address and telephone number. E-mail entries must include the week number in the

subject field. Contests will be judged on the basis of humor and originality. All entries become the property of The Washington Post.

Entries may be edited for taste or content. Results will be published in four weeks. No purchase required for entry. Employees of The Washington Post, and their immediate relatives, are not eligible for prizes. Pseudonymous entries will be disqualified. The revised title for next week's contest is by Thos. Witte of Gaithersburg.

**Report from Week CXLVII**, in which you were asked to become The Terminator, and come up with responses to some unwanted advance that would stop the approach in its tracks. A T-shirt goes to John T. Durkin, who has developed a fine telemarketer protection shield: As soon as he ascertains the caller is trying to sell him something, John robustly breaks into song. Show tunes, usually. He favors "Sit Down, You're Rocking the Boat" from "Guys and Dolls" because there is a high G in the second line "and that really echoes in the headsets." Usually this does the trick nicely. Once, he said, a telemarketer listened politely, applauded, and then went calmly into his spiel, at which point John segued into "I'm Henry the Eighth I Am." The guy finally hung up when John got to the line "Second verse, same as the first." Also, a T-shirt to Cecilia Albans of Leesburg, who shares the telemarketer shield used by her 15-year-old: "My mom can't come to the phone. She's in the shower. No, my dad can't come, either. He's in the shower with her."

◆ Third Runner-Up: **Missionaries at the door: "Sorry, I'm just the burglar. Can you give me a hand with the VCR here?"** (Brian C. Broadus, Charlottesville; Brendan O'Byrne, Regina, Saskatchewan)

◆ Second Runner-Up: **Vacuum cleaner salesman: "Quick, get in here. The baby's coming out butt first, and I'm gonna need some help with the blood."** (Robert Doherty, Alexandria)

◆ First Runner-Up: **Telemarketer: "Correctly answer these questions three, and I will buy some thing from thee. One, what is the Latin name for the gauzy, ribbonlike larva of the east Asian eel?"** (Art Grinath, Takoma Park)

◆ And the winner of the tea-bag-dunking-penguin travelogue: **Prostitute: "Actually, I charge women a lot more than you're asking. Well, I guess it would be fair if you just pay me the difference."** (Barry Blyveis, Columbia)

◆ Honorable Mentions: **Political activist in the street: "Hey, I know you. You're the guy who killed my cat! I can't believe it! Right here in front of me, bold as brass, the guy who killed my cat! Hey, everybody, this is the guy who killed my cat!"** (Bird Waring, New York)

**Telemarketer: "Please talk verr-ry slowww-ly, because I want to write down ev-er-ry word you say."** (Shaina Stark, Darnestown)

**Door-to-door gutter cleaner: "Sure, and can you look for my pet black mamba when you are up there? He got away this morning."** (Tom Witte, Gaithersburg)

**Perfume spritzer at the mall: "Boy, am I glad to see you. Let me get my blouse off so you can target the precise source of the problem."** (Milo Sauer, Fairfax)

**Long-distance service telemarketer: "Sorry, I don't have a telephone."** (Rebecca Nilson-Owens, Madison, Wis.; Richard Wong, Arlington)

**Sidewalk three-card monte dealer: "Can we just play for funsies?"** (Stephen Dudzik, Olney)

**Adopt a Greyhound: "I don't know, they look a little tough and stringy to me."** (Chuck Smith, Woodbridge)

**"Will you accept a collect call?": "Will you accept a blast from my air horn?"** (Chuck Smith, Woodbridge)

**Telemarketer: "We're trying to teach little Susie to use the telephone, so I'm putting her on now."** (Colette Zanin, Greenbelt)

**Panhandler: "Sure. Can you change a deutschmark?"** (Mark Young, Washington)

**Insurance salesman: "If I commit suicide tomorrow, how quickly can my family collect?"** (Seth Brown, Williamstown, Mass.)

**Telemarketer: "Hi, we're the Smiths and we are hearing-impaired. Using the letters on the keypad, please spell out your message."** (Judith Cottrell, New York)

**Girl Scout cookies: "I am sorry, but I am not allowed by law to come within 200 feet of a Girl Scout. Unless you would like to sign this waiver..."** (Seth Brown, Williamstown, Mass.)

**Prostitute: "Sure. Do you have change for a five?"** (Kurt Riefner, Fairbanks, Alaska; Roy Ashley, Washington)

**Salesman at the door: "Good timing! We need another hostage."** (Robert Doherty, Alexandria)

**Guy selling vinyl siding: "Vinyl siding killed my parents."** (Robert Doherty, Alexandria)

**Panhandler: "Change? May I suggest your underwear, my good man?"** (Dave Ferry, Purvis, Miss.)

**Newspaper subscription caller: "Excellent. Does it come in Braille?"** (Kurt Riefner, Fairbanks, Alaska)

Next Week: **Homonymbecility**

## TODAY'S HOROSCOPE | Sydney Omarr

**SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21)** Despite obstacles, you can tear down for purpose of rebuilding. Those who oppose you will ultimately be defeated. Accept challenge.

**CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19)** You exude aura of personality and sex appeal. Be selective; don't become too available. Avoid individual who takes you for granted. Gemini plays role.

**AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18)** Beautify surroundings, including home. You receive gift; a gesture of reconciliation. Broken relationship can be mended. Taurus figures prominently.

**PISCES (Feb. 19-Mar. 20)** Attention revolves around trips, visits and relatives. Element of deception exists. Tonight you learn a secret. Virgo, another Pisces figure in scenario.

**ARIES (Mar. 21-Apr. 19)** You add to financial potential via the written

word. Flirtation lends spice, could become hot and heavy. Be ready for change.

**TAURUS (April 20-May 20)** Circumstances turn in your favor; you get proverbial "lucky break." Domestic adjustment could include actual change of residence.

**GEMINI (May 21-June 20)** Don't fear the unknown; what was faced with apprehension could turn out to be a laughing matter. Pisces plays clandestine role.

**CANCER (June 21-July 22)** Many of your fondest hopes and wishes could become realities. Don't wish for more than you can handle. Popularity increases.

**LEO (July 23-Aug. 22)** Unique honor received. You complete important mission. You can predict your future and make it come true. Aries figures prominently.

**VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22)** Make fresh

start, give serious consideration to going into business for yourself. Wear bright colors, make personal and professional appearances.

**LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22)** Proposals received concerning business, career and marriage. If you meditate, you will discern the "direction of your life."

**SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21)** Focus on legal affairs, public relations and marital status. Give full play to intellectual curiosity. You could become involved with the fashion world.

**IF DEC. 15 IS YOUR BIRTHDAY:** You have unusual voice, appreciate drama and music. You are affectionate and cannot imagine life without love. Taurus, Libra and Scorpio individuals play active roles in your life, could have these letters in names: F, O, X. Before December is completed, an obstacle to your progress will be removed. March and December of next year will be your most memorable, romantic and profitable months.

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**EARLY WARNING FIR**- Keels over in a dead faint in the event of a National Emergency. Not real helpful.

**CANNABIS SPRUCE**- Sap is extremely mellowing on contact. May cause irresponsible behavior.

**FARTIN BALSAM**- Id avoid this one, too.

**AL GORE**- Not technically a tree. Suddenly ubiquitous. Hey, Al! Get outta here you crazy guy!

**PUERILE FIR**- Perfect for homes with a preschool-craft-project-cotton-ball-and-glitter decor scheme.

**WHAT TH**- All right, you're not fooling anyone. Go home or I'll call the Supreme Court!

## TELL ME ABOUT IT

TELL ME, From F1

impressive. Winning should never be more important than whoever it is you'd win.

Carolyn:

I'm not having any problems meeting interesting people since I finally decided to get a life and an opening line (and "less bad" skin). But I've had some very awkward dates of late where we did not quite break the ice all evening. In one case we knew from non-in-person meetings that we liked one another, but in person there was still some ancient, insurmountable barrier. We were just not "ourselves," or else we were, depending on which self you want to count as the real one.

Anyway, should shy people not date other shy people because they'll never get anywhere together? If not, how do you relate to the gregarious person across the table who is probably a whole lot more adventurous and likely to advance the ball?

—28-Year-Old Male  
Dropping Silverware  
at Fancy Restaurants

But think of all the blissfully awkward silences you'd miss out on by avoiding shy people, when you have nothing to say and you don't even need to explain yourself

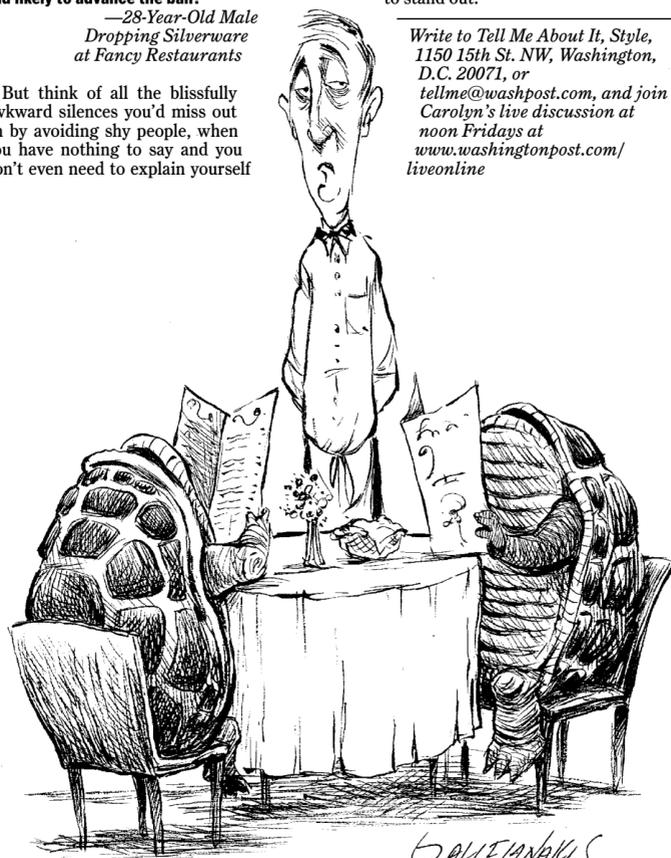
because she doesn't have anything to say, either, and so wordlessly understands.

I'm not entirely kidding. I imagine you could have some soul-sealing conversations about trying to date when you're shy. Take your common interests where you can get them. Embrace them, even. If it takes work to relate to a gregarious date, then she's not the date for you.

And if social paralysis is a little too common an interest to get you through two hours of audible plate-scrapping, introduce other, temporary interests in the form of more active dates, like wine-tasting, bowling, cooking, peering at gallery art. Distract yourselves from yourselves.

There's no law that says early dates must have three courses. A dinner date is merely efficient—an interview with drinks and more flattering light. If you just happen to bomb at interviews, though, even when you know you'd be great for the job, there's nothing wrong with finding a more creative way to stand out.

Write to Tell Me About It, Style, 1150 15th St. NW, Washington, D.C. 20071, or [tellme@washpost.com](mailto:tellme@washpost.com), and join Carolyn's live discussion at noon Fridays at [www.washingtonpost.com/liveonline](http://www.washingtonpost.com/liveonline)



LET ME GUESS, YOU NEED A FEW MORE MINUTES

BY NICK GALIFIANAKIS FOR THE WASHINGTON POST